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The CIA's New Cover

The Rope Dancer
by Victor Marchetti.
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I
In late November the Central Intelligence Agency conducted a series of "senior seminars" so that some of its important bureaucrats could consider its public image. I was invited to attend one session and to give my views on the proper role of the Agency. I suggested that its legitimate activities were limited to studying newspapers and published statistics, listening to the radio, thinking about the world, interpreting data of reconnaissance satellites, and occasionally

publishing the names of foreign spies. I had been led by conversations with a number of CIA officials to believe that they were thinking along the same lines. One CIA man after another eagerly joined the discussion to assure me that the days of the flamboyant covert operations were over. The upper-class amateurs of the OSS who stayed to mastermind operations in Guatemala, Iran, the Congo, and elsewhere—Allen Dulles, Kermit Roosevelt, Richard Bissell, Tracy Barnes, Robert Amory, Desmond Fitzgerald—had died or departed.

In their place, I was assured, was a small army of professionals devoted to preparing intelligence "estimates" for the President and collecting information the clean, modern way, mostly with sensors, computers, and sophisticated reconnaissance devices. Even Gary Powers, the U-2 pilot, would now be as much a museum piece as Mata Hari. (There are about 18,000 employees in the CIA and 200,000 in the entire "intelligence community" itself. The cost of maintaining them is somewhere between \$5 billion and \$6 billion annually. The employment figures do not include foreign agents or mercenaries, such as the CIA's 100,000-man hired army in Laos.)

A week after my visit to the "senior seminar" *Newsweek* ran a long story on "the new espionage" with a picture of CIA Director Richard Helms on the cover. The reporters clearly had spoken to some of the same people I had. As *Newsweek* said, "The gaudy era of the

adventurer has passed in the American the spy business; the bureaucratic age of ingt Richard C. Helms and his gray spe- kno cialists has settled in." I began to have fina an uneasy feeling that *Newsweek's* ingt article was a cover story in more than vote one sense.

It has always been difficult to faille analyze organizations that engage in A false advertising about themselves. Part of i of the responsibility of the CIA is to larly spread confusion about its own work. the The world of Richard Helms and his beca "specialists" does indeed differ from ized that of Allen Dulles. Intelligence organ- Hel izations, in spite of their predilection over for what English judges used to call ligen "frolics of their own," are servants of Age policy. When policy changes, they Bur must eventually change too, although the because of the atmosphere of secrecy cen and deception in which they operate, ove such changes are exceptionally hard to vice control. To understand the "new Age espionage" one must see it as part of imp the Nixon Doctrine which, in essence, Th is a global strategy for maintaining US power and influence without overtly reor involving the nation in another ground Hei war.

But we cannot comprehend recent lige developments in the "intelligence com- nev munity" without understanding what fur do. In a speech before the National me Press Club, the director discouraged w journalists from making the attempt. de "You've just got to trust us. We are n honorable men." The same speech is p made each year to the small but growing number of senators who want h a closer check on the CIA. In asking, tj on November 10, for a "Select Com- ci mittee on the Coordination of United n States Activities Abroad to oversee p activities of the Central Intelligence t Agency," Senator Stuart Symington p noted that "the subcommittee having A oversight of the Central Intelligence i Agency has not met once this year." t

Symington, a former Secretary of c the Air Force and veteran member of i the Armed Services Committee, has t also said that "there is no federal agency in our government whose activ- ities receive less scrutiny and control than the CIA." Moreover, soon after Symington spoke, Senator Allen J.

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